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THE REASONABLENESS
OF REQUIRING
SUBSCRIPTION
TO
ARTICLES OF RELIGION
FROM PERSONS TO BE ADMITTED TO
HOLY ORDERS, OR A CURE OF SOULS,
VINDICATED IN A
CHARGE
DELIVERED TO THE
CLERGY
OF THE
DIOCESE OF OXFORD,
IN THE YEAR 1771.

By THOMAS RANDOLPH, D.D.
President of C. C. C. Lady MARGARET's Professor
of Divinity, and Arch-Deacon of *Oxford*.

Published at the united Request of the Clergy.

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ARTICLES OF RELIGION

Imprimatur,

THO. FOTHERGILL,

Vice-Can. Dep. Oxon.

Nov. 14. 1771.



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TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE

LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD

THIS

C H A R G E

IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

TO THE

RIGHTS OF THE

LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD



G. E.

THE AUTHOR

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

IT has not been my Custom, nor that of my Predecessors, to detain you with a Charge on every Visitation. You stand not, I think, in need of such frequent Admonitions, either to instruct you in your Duty, or to enforce on you the Practice of it. And it may perhaps seem less necessary now, than ever, to give myself, and you, this Trouble, when you have so lately received such an excellent Charge from your worthy Diocesan. It might be sufficient to exhort you seriously to call to Mind the good Instructions, which you then received, and diligently to follow them.

But an Attempt lately set on foot, and carried on with great Zeal, to set aside all *Subscription* to our *Articles* and *Liturgy*, has made me think it incumbent on me to deliver to you my Sentiments on this Head. I shall confine myself to what chiefly concerns us of the *Clergy*, the Reasonableness of requiring *Subscription to Articles of Religion* from Persons to be admitted to *holy Orders*, or to a *Cure of Souls*.

And

And I hope I need not employ many Words to convince you that Persons, who are to be Teachers of others, should be themselves *sound in the Faith*, and should give to those, who ordain, and appoint them, some Proof, and Assurance, that they are so. ^a St. Paul directs *Timothy* to commit those things which he had heard to faithful Men, who should be able to teach others also: ^b and to ordain such *Deacons* only, as hold the *Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience*. ^c And he commissions *Titus* to ordain such *Elders in every City*, as hold fast the faithful Word, as they had been taught, that they might be able by sound Doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the Gainsayers. And this is agreeable to Reason, as well as Scripture. In Affairs of less Concern, and Importance, would you employ a Man to teach others, who did not understand, or who misunderstood, the things he was to teach? Soundness of Doctrine is indeed the principal thing to be required in a Christian Teacher. Ignorant Persons are certainly no way qualified to be Teachers. But Errour is worse than Ignorance: a blind Guide being more eligible than a self-sufficient one, who would

^a 2 Tim. ii. 2.

^b 1 Tim. iii. 9.

^c Tit. i. 9.

purposely carry you the wrong Way. Nor does a bad Life so immediately affect the People under the Teacher's Care, as erroneous Principles do. The People may receive Profit from the good Doctrine of a wicked Minister, and need not copy after his bad Example. But the Appointment of erroneous, and false, Teachers is inconsistent with the very End and Design of such Appointment, which is to instruct the People in the Truth, and (as the *Apostle* speaks) *by sound Doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the Gainsayers.*

Accordingly in all Ages of the Church great Care has been taken to enquire into the religious Principles of Persons to be admitted into Orders, or to a Cure of Souls, though different Methods may have been pursued in different Times, and Places. This Method of requiring *Subscription* to known *Articles of Faith* seems to be the least exceptionable of any. If no such *Subscription* were required by publick Authority, every Bishop would doubtless be bound to enquire into the religious Principles of those, who offered themselves for holy Orders, and to reject all such, as he judged to be *unsound in the Faith*. But is it not much for the Ease of the Bishop to have a certain Rule to go by?

and

and is he not hereby freed from the odious, and invidious, Task of judging of Men's Faith, and rejecting Candidates arbitrarily, according to his own private Opinion? And with regard to the Candidates, is it not much better to know previously what Test of their Orthodoxy will be required of them, than to be subject to the Caprice of one Man, and run the Risk of a Refusal, without knowing what Account of their Faith will be demanded? And with regard to the Church, a Test agreed upon by the whole Body of the Bishops and Clergy is certainly a better and securer Way of keeping false and erroneous Teachers out of the Church, than the leaving the matter to the Discretion of each private Bishop, some of whom might happen themselves to be ignorant, indolent, or unsound in the Faith. One would hope that so easy, so equitable, and so well approved, a Method of proving the Faith of Candidates for the Ministry would meet with but little Opposition. But loud has been the Clamour against such *Subscription*, and many are the Objections.

^d One chief thing objected is that this *Subscription interferes with the Rights of pri-*

d Confessional, p. 32, 38. *Proposals for an Application to Parliament.*

vate

rate Judgment, and is an *Infringement of our Christian Liberty*. --- But whose *Liberty*, or what *Liberty*, is hereby infringed? A Test required of Candidates for the Ministry can affect those only, who desire such Office. And these are every one still left at *Liberty* to judge for themselves, and think as they please. If they approve not the Doctrines of our *Articles*, they are at *Liberty* whether they will *subscribe* to them, or not. No one compells them to *subscribe*, or assent, to these Doctrines. We only refuse to admit into the Ministry those, who in Points, which we judge important, think differently from us. And herein the Governours of our Church have as much Right to judge for themselves, as these Objectors have. Each Bishop might, and must, have exercised the same Right, if nothing herein had been defined by publick Authority. If any one like not our Terms he may apply himself to some other Profession, or Business, and has no reason to complain of any Injury done him.

‘ But is not hereby *many a conscientious Minister laid under the unhappy Dilemma of either subscribing, or starving?* --- I scarce know how to give a serious Answer to such Questions --- *Ministers* --- but we are speak-

ing of those, who *desire the Office of a Minister.* † And of these not only a *pure Conscience* is required, but that they *hold the Mystery of the Faith.* If they are not suffered to enter into the Ministry, are there no other Businesses, or Professions, by which they might get an honest Livelihood? Is there no Bread to be got by any other Means, but only by thrusting themselves into the Ministry? Our Clergy are indeed in general so meanly provided for, and the rich Benefices, and Preferments, confined to so few, that we can scarce think Men in earnest, who pretend that they are reduced to the Necessity of *starving* by being kept out of the Ministry. Instances of these *starving, conscientious Non-subscribers*, are, I believe, very rare.

But it is said that *we are hereby deprived of the Labours of worthy Men.* --- If by *worthy Men* are meant fit Persons, we must beg leave to deny that those, who hold things *contrary to sound Doctrine*, are *worthy Men.* Such Men may be sincere in their Profession, and of unblameable Life and Conversation. They may be also Men of good Learning and Abilities: but, notwithstanding all these Qualifications, we cannot think them fit to

be entrusted with the Ministry of the Gospel, if they *err concerning the Faith*. Nor do I deny that some have had Scruples concerning some of our *Articles*, and have been thereby debarred from serving in the Ministry, who would have done good Service to the Church. But this I will be bold to say, that we have not wanted their Assistance. No Church has produced greater Ornaments of the Christian Profession than the *Church of England* has, in all Ages since its first Establishment to this Day. And for the Proof of this I may appeal to the Annals of our History, and to your own Knowledge, and Experience.

^f Another thing pretended is that *requiring Subscription to Forms of human Composition is adding to the Rule of Faith*. --- We do not set up our *Articles* for a *Rule of Faith*, or appeal to them as such. Nor do we prove our Doctrines by our *Articles*, but from *Scripture* only, which we acknowledge to be *the sole Rule of Faith*, by which alone the Truth of all Doctrines, and of our *Articles* themselves, must be tried. Our *Articles* themselves teach that ^g *the Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to Salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be*

^f Confessional, ch. vi.

^g Art. vi,

proved thereby, is not to be required of any Man, that it should be believed as an *Article of the Faith*, or be thought requisite, or necessary, to *Salvation*.---But though our Church pretends not to be infallible, ^h yet she claims the same Right, as has been claimed, and exercised, by all *Christian Churches*, ⁱ of taking Care that her Clergy *teach no other Doctrine*, but what she judges to be true, and agreeable to *Scripture*, and of requiring of them proper Security that they shall do so. Our *Articles*, though we trust that the Truth of them may be proved by *Scripture*, are not imposed on any Man, much less on all Men, as *Articles of Faith necessary to Salvation*, but rather as *Articles of Enquiry*, whereby to discover, whether those who offer themselves for the Ministry are *apt to teach*, and hold the true Doctrine of *Scripture*. Some such Enquiry it would be the Duty of every Bishop to make with regard

h The necessity of this is acknowledged, and contended for, by *Calvin*, who in his *Epistle to the Protector of England* thus expresses himself — *Claudenda est enim janua curiosis doctrinis. Ratio autem expedita ad eam rem una est, si extet nempe summa quædam doctrinæ ab omnibus recepta, quam inter prædicandum sequantur omnes, ad quam etiam observandam omnes Episcopi & Parochi jurejurando adstringantur, ut nemo ad munus ecclesiasticum admittatur, nisi spondeat illum doctrinæ consensum sibi inviolatum futurum.*

i See 1 Tim. i. 3.

to all such Candidates, if there were no Form of *Articles* prescribed.

^k But is not a *Declaration* that we will teach nothing but what we are persuaded may be concluded, and proved, by the *Scripture* a sufficient Test of our Orthodoxy? --- It is such a Test, as would admit into the Ministry *Po-pish Priests*, *Jesuits*, and all the wildest *Sec-taries*: for all these pretend to found their Doctrines on *Scripture*.

^l But do we think that *new and unscriptu-ral Words* will better fix the Sense of *Scripture-Doctrine* than the Words of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*? --- We acknowledge the *Scriptures* to be sufficiently clear in all Matters neces-sary to Salvation. But what if Men wrest these *Scriptures*? explain away the plainest Texts of *Scripture*, and pretend to prove the most *erroneous*, and pernicious, Doctrines from *Scripture*? Are such Men to be en-trusted with the Ministry of the Gospel, and commissioned to teach these erroneous Doctrines? What then is to be done in this Case? I know of no better way of Security against such Deceivers than by drawing up *Articles* explaining such *Scriptures* as these Men have perverted, and guarding against their Misconstructions. Thus for instance,

^k *Confessional*, p. 16, 338.

^l *Ibid.* p. 19.

the Words of St. *John* ---^m *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* --- are clear, and plain to any common Understanding. But, if Men will evade the Force of such plain Texts by subtle Distinctions, and tell us that *Christ* is only a *secondary*, and *inferiour* kind of *God*; a *God by Office only, and not by Nature*; a *God in the same Sense only, as Angels, as Moses, and other Men, are called Gods*; as we think such Interpreters of *Scripture* not qualified to be Teachers of the Gospel, we judge it necessary to guard against these Evasions. If we are on this account forced to make use of *new Terms*, the Novelty is chargeable, not on us, but on them. And it may be easily shewn, ⁿ and indeed has been shewn, that every *Article*, both of the *Nicene*, and *Athanasian*, *Creed*, which they exclaim so bitterly against, was occasioned by the *new, and unscriptural*, Distinctions of subtle Corrupters of the Faith. Nor could we guard against the Errours of *Pope-ry*, and other *Seċtaries*, but by *new Words* expressly condemning the *unscriptural* Doctrines, which they had introduced. The very Persons, who make this Objection, in their

^m Joh. i. 1. ⁿ See *Waterland's Critical History of the Athanasian Creed*, Chap. x.

Writings, and Discourses, deliver themselves in Words not occurring in *Scripture*, and think they can make the Doctrines of *Scripture* more plain by Words of their own devising. Why then will they not allow the Governours of the Church to guard against the Misconstructions of *vain Talkers and Deceivers* by Words adapted to this Purpose? If this is not allowed, we can (as I said before) have no Fence to prevent *Popish* Emisfaries, or any false Teachers whatsoever, from thrusting themselves into the Ministry.

Another common Objection is that *this Authority claimed by our Church to establish Confessions will equally serve to vindicate the Church of Rome with regard to her Impositions.*

--- But the Case is in many Respects widely different. Not to mention that the Doctrines established by the *Church of Rome* are manifestly false, and repugnant to *Scripture*, which we can prove ours not to be: we require those, who are to be entrusted with the Ministry, and Government, of our Church to subscribe to our *Articles*: the *Church of Rome* requires her Additions to the Faith to be believed by all Men, Laity, as well as Clergy, under Penalty of Damnation: and thunders out her Anathemas against all, who will not receive her Decisions on every Point. We
disclaim,

disclaim, and abhor, all Persecution : that *Church* persecutes all who dissent from her with Fire and Faggot.

Again, that *Church* lays claim to *Infallibility*, usurps an absolute Authority over Men's Consciences, and denies all Right of private Judgment in matters of Faith. We pretend not to be *infallible*: we permit, and desire, all Men to judge for themselves. But then the Governours of our Church claim the same Right, which they allow to others, of judging for themselves, and acting accordingly. And in virtue of this Right they think themselves entitled to judge what Doctrines are fit to be taught in the Church, and what Securities are to be required of those, who enter into the Ministry, *that they teach no other Doctrine.* ° This Power was exercised by all Christian Churches, before the Establishment of *Popery*: and has been claimed by all *Protestant* Churches ever since the *Reformation*. One chief End indeed of *Protestant Confessions*, and of our *Articles* in particular, was to be a Fence against *Popery*: and, I humbly apprehend, that we cannot do a thing more acceptable to the *Romish Church*, or more serviceable to their Cause, than to throw down this Fence.

° See *Bingham* Antiq. B. iv. Ch. 3. l. 2.

It is farther said that *by repealing the Laws requiring Subscription, we shall prevent the evil Consequences of Dissention, and secure the Peace of our Church.* --- But why should *Subscription* destroy this *Peace*? Why may not Persons of different Persuasions, and Communion, live in Peace, and mutual Charity? We bear no Hatred, or Malice, to those who dissent from us: nor do we desire to persecute, or injure, them. If they will suffer us to be at Peace, we shall not molest them. If they approve not the Doctrines of our *Articles*, they need not subscribe to them. If they dislike not the Terms of our Communion, we compell them not to come in: they have a full Toleration to repair to any Conventicle they like best, or to set up one for themselves. Again, would the Repeal of these Laws promote, or restore, Peace? Would Persons of different Persuasions be less zealous in Defence of their respective Tenets, or treat their Opponents with less Severity? Would our Sectaries, if admitted within the Pale of the Church, be more quiet within Doors, than they are without. ^p The bitter and virulent Invectives, which have been published against our Church, and against some of its brightest Ornaments, give us

^p See *Confessional* from beginning to end.

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little

little Room to hope for Peace, by Compliance with such Men's clamorous Demands. ^p Nor do we think it would promote, either Peace, or Edification, if all Men of all Persuasions were allowed, and commissioned, to teach in our Churches whatever Doctrines they pleased. Would not rather every Parish have a System of Divinity peculiar to itself? and perhaps in the same Church one Doctrine might be preached in the Morning, and another quite different set forth with equal Authority in the Afternoon? And thus that glorious Confusion would soon take Place, which Infidels wish for, and *the Church of Rome* would rejoice to see. And many well-disposed Persons, not knowing where to find *the Church of England*, would take Refuge in *Popery*. The Experiment was in great measure tried last Century: and the Consequence was not *Peace*, but *Strife*, and *Confusion*, and every evil Work. We may well hope that our Governours, both in Church, and State, will have more regard to their own Peace, and that of the Publick, than to be willing to repeat the Experiment.

Another Objection is that *such Forms of Faith will not prevent Diversity of Opinions, but only tempt Men to turn Hypocrites*. --- If

q See Mr. *White's* Append. to his three Letters, p. 70.

the best Method we can think of to *avoid Diversities of Opinions, and establish Consent touching true Religion*, has through the Perverseness, and Corruption, of Mankind a contrary Effect, surely not we, but these *Hypocrites* are to blame. But we cannot think it a good Reason for throwing down all the Fences of our *Vineyard*, because some *wild Boars* will sometimes break through them. There is nothing but what may be perverted, and abus'd, by *Men of corrupt Minds, destitute of the Truth*. Even the Gospel of Peace has given Occasion to Division, and Contention. *Oaths* were designed to *put an End to all Strife*; to secure Obedience to the Laws, and Allegiance to the Sovereign. And yet we have too many Instances of Men's swearing to Falshoods; of taking *Oaths of Allegiance*, and immediately breaking out into Rebellion. When this is allowed as a Reason for requiring no such *Oaths*, then it may be urged as an Argument for abolishing all *Subscriptions*. But if Men will trifle with *Oaths*, and *Subscriptions*, it is their Fault, and not that of the Imposers.

But the loudest Clamour is against such of our *Articles*, as have been thought to favour the Doctrine of *Calvin*. And here we are to combat with Enemies of all Sorts. The Fol-

lowers of *Arius*, and *Socinus*, make this a Plea for subscribing the *Articles* in their own Sense : and pretend that all, who are not the Disciples of *Calvin*, are guilty of the like Prevarication. And some among ourselves, who pretend indeed to be the only true Members of the *Church of England*, join in the Cry, and accuse all, who are not as rigid *Calvinists* as themselves, of *Equivocation*, and *Hypocrisy*, of *impiously setting their Hands to Doctrines, which in their Hearts they never assented to*. As these heavy Charges against us may have disturbed the Minds of some well-disposed Persons, it may be proper to look back into the first Occasion, and Design, of such *Articles*. * The thing, which gave the first Occasion to the *Reformation* begun by *Luther*, was the scandalous Practice of selling *Papal Indulgences*. This gave Rise to Disputes about *the Merit of Good Works* : and this again opened a Door to Controversies about *God's Grace*, and *Free-Will*, and other nice, and difficult Points. In these matters the first *Reformers* differed from one another : and some of them, and particularly *Luther* himself, were in the Heat of Controversy betrayed into some un-

* See *Pietas Oxon.* p. 28, 68. and other Historians of those Times.

† See *Steidan*, *Seckendorf*,

guarded,

guarded, and unwarrantable, Expressions. And, what was still worse, others, setting up for *Reformers*, broached many erroneous, and pestilent, Doctrines. Some denied the *Divinity of our Blessed Saviour*: others denied the Necessity of *Good Works*, and held that the *Saints* could not sin; and under this Pretence brake out into Sedition, and committed the grossest Enormities. The *Papists* made great Advantages of these Differences among *Protestants*. They pretended that, by forsaking the *Catholick Church*, Men were led into endless Disputes: and they charged the hasty Assertions of particular Writers, or Errors of false Teachers, and wild *Enthusiasts*, upon the *Protestants* in general. * This laid the *Protestants* under a Necessity of vindicating themselves. And to this End they drew up that celebrated *Confession of Faith*, which they presented to the Diet of *Augsbourg*. In this they had two Views, first, to acquit themselves of the Scandal of abetting wild and seditious, *Enthusiasts*, and to declare to all the World what were their real Doctrines: secondly, to prevent such *En-*

* The very same Account of this affair is given by the Author of the *Confessional*, and he acknowledges this Necessity, and thereby effectually confutes himself. See *Confessional*, p 4. & 5. and Second Letter to the Author, p. 23.

thusiasts

thufasts on the one Hand, and *Popifh* Emiffaries on the other, from intruding themfelves into their Miniftry. And herein they proceeded with great Prudence, and Moderation. The Difputes, which had arifen on thefe Points, obliged them in fome fort to declare their Sentiments concerning them. But then they drew up their *Articles* in general, and comprehensive, Terms. They condemned on the one Hand the *Papifts*, who asserted *the Merit of Good Works*, and on the other Hand the *Antinomians*, who denied the Neceffity of them. And again they condemned the *Pelagians*, who denied the Neceffity of *God's Grace*: and on the other Hand the *Anabaptifts*, and others, who denied all *Free-Will*. ^t But they

^t It is remarkable that there were the like Difputes about *Predefination*, and *Grace* in the *Romifh Church* before the *Council of Trent*, as have been fince among *Proteftants*; that thefe Points were warmly debated in that Council; and that they purpofely framed their Decrees in fuch manner, as to fatisfy both Parties; that thefe Parties continued their Difputes during the fitting of that Council, and each Party claimed the Authority of the Council on their Side; but the Fathers there affembled never thought fit to explain their own Decrees, or decide this Controverfy. But thefe Differences ftill fubfift in that *Church* among thofe who fubfcribe to the Decrees of the *Council of Trent*. Though this Procedure may feem rather unaccountable in a Church which claims an infallible Power of deciding all Controverfies, yet I cannot but applaud their Prudence, and wifh they had fhewn the like Moderation in other Points. See F. Paul's Hift. of the *Council of Trent*. B. ii. Heylin's Hift. Quinquart. Controv. C 3.

so worded their *Articles*, as to comprehend all those, who thought soberly, and moderately, on these Points, though they differed from one another in the Manner of explaining them. Our Reformers here in *England* in *King Edward the Sixth's* Time went on the same Plan, and acted with the like Prudence, and Moderation. ^u They were no Disciples of *Calvin*: but they so drew up their *Articles*, as to include Persons of different Persuasions in these Points. In *Queen Elizabeth's* Reign these *Articles* were reviewed, and received some Alterations, and this is the Form of *Articles*, which we now subscribe to. But the Convocation, who drew up these *Articles*, though it must be owned that many of them had then imbibed the Sentiments of *Calvin*, yet observed the same Moderation as their Predecessors had done: nor did they add one single Article in favour of *Calvinism*. The *seventeenth Article*, which treats of *Predestination*, is drawn up without any mention of *absolute Reprobation*, and tells us that *we must receive God's Promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: which* (^w as the

^u See this proved in *Dr. Nowell's Answer to Pietas Oxon.* p. 76, &c.

^w *Annals of the Reformation*, Ch. 28. See also *Third Letter to Author of Confessional*, p. 33, &c. *Dr. Fothergill's Postscript*

learned Mr. *Strype* observes) *seems to have been done to prevent any Scruple, which might arise to any Protestant against subscribing the said Articles.* " And accordingly, when soon after Disputes ran high on these Points, the Calvinists attempted to add new *Articles*, and gave this Reason for it, that *these Points were not before concluded, and defined, by publick Authority.*

What then is required of us when we are called upon to *subscribe* our *Articles*? and in what Sense do we *subscribe* them? Our *Subscription* is, as I apprehend, a Declaration of our Belief, and Assent to the Truth of the Doctrines contained in the *Articles*: and we are required to *subscribe* them in the Sense of the Imposers. We are not to *subscribe* them in our own Sense, or in any Sense, which we can possibly put upon the Words: for this would in all other Cases be esteemed downright Prevarication. Nor are we to *subscribe* them so far only, as they are agreeable to *Scripture*: for this is no *Subscription* at all. This amounts to a Declaration that we think *these Articles agreeable to Scripture so far only as they are agreeable to Scripture*, which (* as Bishop *Conybeare* justly observes)

script to Sermon on *Is. 42, 24.* Bull *Apologia pro Harmonia*
— *Waterland's* Supplement to Case of *Arian Subscription.*

w See *Strype's* Life of *Whitgift*, App. B. iv. N^o. 25.

x Sermon on *Tim. vi. 3, 4.* p. 25.

is as much trifling with common Sense, as with common Honesty. But how are we to know the Sense of the Imposers? I suppose it may in most Cases be judged of from the plain, usual, and literal, Signification of the Words used. Where the Words of the *Article* are plain, and determinate, there can be no Doubt of its Meaning. Where Doctrines are expressly asserted, or Errours expressly condemned, those who disbelieve the Doctrines so asserted, or hold the Errours so condemned, cannot honestly subscribe. No *Papist* can conscientiously subscribe to our *Articles*: most of the peculiar Tenets of *Popery*, the Doctrine of the *Infallibility of the Church*, the *Merit of Good Works*, *Purgatory*, *Transubstantiation*, the *Worship of Images and Relicks*, and *Invocation of Saints*, are therein expressly condemned. No *Socinian*, or *Arian*, can honestly subscribe an *Article*, which asserts that *in the Unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one Substance, Power, and Eternity*. No one, who denies the Necessity of *Divine Grace*, can subscribe to the *Tenth Article*: nor can any one, who denies the Necessity of *Good Works*, subscribe to the *Twelfth*. ' But then there are several *Arti-*

y See Dr. *Waterland's* Case of *Arian Subscription*, p. 40. — Second Letter to the Author of the *Confessional*, p. 136, &c. p. 160, &c. — Dr. *Nowel's* Answer to *Pietas Oxon.* p. 119, &c.

cles purposely worded in general Terms. To these Persons, who agree in the general Doctrine there delivered, may honestly subscribe, though they are of different Persuasions in the Explication of this general Doctrine. And in this Case we are to enquire what general Doctrine the Imposers designed to require our Assent to, not what were their private Opinions with regard to the particular Explications of it. There is a plain Instance of this in the 23d Article, which teaches that *it is not lawful for any Man to take upon him the Office of publick Preaching, or Ministring the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called, and sent, which be chosen, and called to this Work by Men, who have publick Authority given to them in the Congregation to call, and send Ministers into the Lord's Vineyard.* --- Who those are is not here determined. The Compilers were not willing to condemn, or unchurch, the Reformed Churches abroad: and therefore prudently avoided determining the Question whether *Episcopal Ordination* is necessary. Those who hold, and those who deny, the Necessity of *Episcopal Ordination*, may both subscribe to this Article: those only are condemned by it,

it, who hold that a Man may preach without any lawful Vocation. A like Instance of Moderation is plainly to be seen in the 28th Article. ^z They purposely avoided defining the Manner of *Christ's Presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. Nay they struck out Part of an *Article* among those drawn up in *King Edward the Sixth's Time*, which seemed to deny all *corporal Presence*, and which therefore the Lutherans might scruple *subscribing* to, and contented themselves with condemning those only, who held the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or affirmed that *the Body of Christ was eaten after a carnal Manner*. The like Caution they have observed in those *Articles* relating to *Predestination, Free-Will, &c.* They worded them in general Terms, that Persons, who were of different Persuasions in several Particulars relating to them, might yet subscribe, as agreeing in the general Doctrine there delivered. ^a They went, as a *Calvinistical* Writer Bishop *Hall* observes, a Mid-way between both, guarding against the Extremities on each Side; on one Hand condemning the *Papists*, who ascribed a *Merit* to *Good Works*, and on the other the *Antinomians*, who denied the Necessity of them. Whenever therefore we sub-

^z Bp *Burnet's* Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. II. B. 3. p. 405.

^a *Via media.*

scribe

scribe to these *Articles*, we do not *subscribe* in contrary, or different, Senses. We all *subscribe* to the same general Sense, though, in explaining the Particulars relating to it, we use that Liberty of Judgment, which the Church hath purposely left to us.

However, if the Oppugners of our *Articles* would be content with expunging these *Articles*, we might, if by this means Peace might be obtained, be possibly willing to comply with them. There may perhaps be less Occasion for such *Articles* now, than there was in those Times. But this is not all they contend for. They inveigh against all *Subscriptions* in general: nay we must part with our ^b *Liturgy* too, and our *Creeds*. The principal thing indeed, which seems to be aimed at by most of these Reformers, is the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, so plainly taught, both in our *Articles*, and our *Liturgy*. This has been always from the very Beginning of

b One Argument used against *Subscription to the Liturgy* is, that such *Requisition of Subscription* must eventually preclude all *Improvement in a Liturgy*; which is confuted by Fact, there having at different Times been several Additions, and Improvements, made in our *Liturgy*. By our *Subscription* we only declare that *the Book of Common Prayer, &c. containeth nothing in it contrary to the Word of God, and that it may lawfully be used, and that we ourselves will use it.* — And what is there herein, which should forbid, or prevent, the Governours of our Church from making *Improvements in our Liturgy*?

Christianity

Christianity thought an essential *Article of Faith*: and, if any come unto us, and bring not this *Doctrine*, we may, and ought to shut our Gates against him. I cannot indeed but wonder how Men of this Persuasion should expect, or desire, to be included in *Communion* with those who believe our *Blessed Saviour's Divinity*. If we believe *Christ*, and the *Holy Spirit*, to be really and truly *God*, we ought in our publick Prayers to ascribe to them the Titles, the Honour, the Worship, due to *God*: if we do not believe this, we cannot, I think, pay them such Honours without Idolatry. How then can there be any *Communion* between Persons of Sentiments so diametrically opposite? how can they join in Worship, who have not the same Object of Worship? Far be it from me to desire to persecute them, or injure them in the least, in their Persons, or Possessions: but surely we may exclude them from our *Communion*, and much more from our *Ministry*, without any Breach of Charity. But neither, if this Point were given up, will they be contented. No, they declare against all *Subscriptions*, except only to the *Truth of the Holy Scriptures*, which would let in (as I observed before) not only *Arians*, but *Papists*, and all the wildest *Sectaries*. They protest

protest against all *Impositions*, and such they call all *human Ordinances*: but without something of this Kind there could be neither Establishment, nor Church, nor indeed any Publick Worship.

If any of us then should think that some things in our *Articles*, or *Liturgy*, might be amended, (as no human Composition can be free from all Imperfections) yet let us take Care how we listen to the plausible Suggestions of those, who under the Pretence of the Reformation of our Church strike at the very Foundation of it. And this especially at this Time, when a Spirit of Licentiousness seems to be prevailing, and a Contempt of all Government, which threatens the Subversion of our happy Constitution, both in Church, and State. But I have already detained you too long, and therefore shall conclude with exhorting you all to *hold fast the faithful Word, as you have been taught*: ^d and avoid them which cause Divisions, and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine, which ye have learned. Let no Man deceive you with vain Words. Give no Assistance, Countenance, or Encouragement, to these Innovatours, who

^c Tit. i. 9.

^d Rom. xvi. 17.

under the Pretence of Reformation would
*privily bring in damnable Heresies. ---^c Fear
 God, and honour the King, and meddle not
 with them that are given to change.*

^c Prov. xxiv. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 17.

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